



Department of Commerce Occupational Safety and Health Report

NOVEMBER 2003

Occupational Safety and Health Report

November 2003

Introduction

This report provides an update to all Department of Commerce (DOC) employees on the progress of Departmental safety and occupational health initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety and occupational health issues for October 2003. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides information on forthcoming safety and occupational health initiatives. Section Two, Significant Safety and Occupational Health Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns, which arose in October 2003. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Workers' Compensation Program for October 2003, and an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts. Section Four, Survey Results, provides the November results from the on-line survey available through the intranet Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program Web Site.

Section One: Program Initiatives

The quarterly meeting of the Department's Safety and Occupational Health Council was held on October 23, with Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Administration, Mr. Otto Wolff, presiding. Safety managers and collateral duty safety representatives from each major bureau provided assessments of the implementation of their safety and health programs and discussed strategies on actions needed to enhance programs, which are not fully implemented. To view the OSH Council slide presentation and meeting minutes click on <http://ohrm/safetyprogram/MonthlySafetyCouncil.htm>.

The Department's new Director, Office of Safety and Occupational Health (OOSH), Dr. Richard Hartman presented the vision for this fiscal year to: 1) leverage resources, 2) standardize safety and occupational health assessments, and 3) train, educate and mentor. Additionally, he stated that the Office of Safety and Occupational Health would start developing top-down safety and occupational health DAO policy, review existing budget processes and explore alternatives, and look into the feasibility for a centralized safety and occupational health information technology system.

As OOSH's first initiative to centralize safety and occupational health information, staff members from OOSH, DOC information technology representatives, and Contract Claims Services Inc. met with representatives from the Department of Labor to evaluate their Safety and Health Information Management System (SHIMS), a web-based system for completing, processing, submitting, standardizing, and centralizing workers compensation claims. OOSH and DOL are currently working together to evaluate and modify SHIMS to meet DOC needs.

To initiate training and mentorship, OOSH conducted its first weekly internal safety training session covering OSHA's Lockout/Tagout standard for OOSH staff. This training is part of an on-going program to upgrade the staffs occupational safety and health skills and to develop research and presentation skills.

Section Two: Significant Safety and Occupational Health Issues

Recently, an unfortunate incident occurred where a Census employee was killed in a traffic accident. Although the seat belt was worn and the air bag deployed, regrettably, neither assisted. The accident was the result of a high-speed head-on collision due to icy road conditions.

Seat belts are your best protection if you are involved in a motor vehicle accident.¹ They are designed so that the strongest areas of your body - the bones of your hips, shoulders and chest, absorb the forces in a crash. Seat belts also keep you in place so that your face, head, and chest are less likely to strike the windshield, dashboard or the vehicle's interior frame, and they prevent you and other occupants from being thrown into each other or ejected from the vehicle. It is very important that your seat belt is properly adjusted when you buckle up. Do not wear the seat belt across your stomach because the likelihood of serious injury increases dramatically. Also, do not place the shoulder belt behind your back, as it cannot restrain your upper body when it is in this position. Your head and chest could strike the steering wheel or dashboard if the shoulder belt is not positioned across your chest. Although air bags provide protection in frontal crashes, they offer little or no protection in a side, rear or rollover crash.² It is essential that seat belts always be worn even if your vehicle is equipped with air bags.

Employees on official Federal government business are required to wear seat belts while riding in a vehicle, whether driving or as a passenger. This requirement is mandated by Executive Order 13043, *Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States*, which went into effect in April 1997. Additionally, most states have laws that require the use of seat belts, and all states require child passengers to be in a safety seat (based on age, size, and weight).³ These laws have been extremely effective in increasing the use of seat belts, and saving thousands of lives each year. Supervisors should remind employees of the requirements of Executive Order 13043, because "Seat Belts Save Lives" and have been proven to be effective in saving lives and preventing serious injuries for over twenty years.

¹ Traffic Safety Facts Overview, National Center for Statistics & Analysis Research & Development 400 Seventh Street, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20590

² National Transportation Safety Administration Facts, U.S Department of Transportation, Summer 1996.

³ Ibid, p.2.

Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis

This section provides information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years and analyzes the types of injuries across the Department. Due to late submissions, processing limitations and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records.

Incidence Rate: The incidence rate (IR) represents the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers and is calculated as follows:

$$IR = \frac{N}{EH}(200,000)$$

N	=	Number of injuries and illnesses
EH	=	Total hours worked by all employees during the year ¹
200,000	=	Base for 100 equivalent full-time workers (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year)

¹ The total hours worked were determined based on the total number of employees and the average hours.

The Commerce Workers' Compensation Program keeps records on all injury and illness claims, including those that did not include any lost work time. An accounting of all incidents allows follow-up and more comprehensive program review by safety representatives. However, the incident rates from those records are not directly comparable, since they include many minor injuries and illnesses that are not considered "work-related" under Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for private industry. Injury rates may be skewed as safety awareness increases and employees are encouraged to report all injuries, causing total injury rates to increase despite improvements to safety. Using standardized OSHA recordable incident reporting helps to reduce inconsistent reporting. An OSHA recordable incident is a work-related injury or illness that resulted in one or more of the following: medical treatment beyond first aid, a significant injury or illness diagnosed by a physician or other licensed health care professional, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, loss of consciousness, or death.

Table 1A provides data that corresponds to the OSHA recordable injury criteria. The remaining tables and charts include data for all cases submitted to the Workers' Compensation Program.

Chart 1

Historical Total Case Incidence Rate Trend (TCIR)

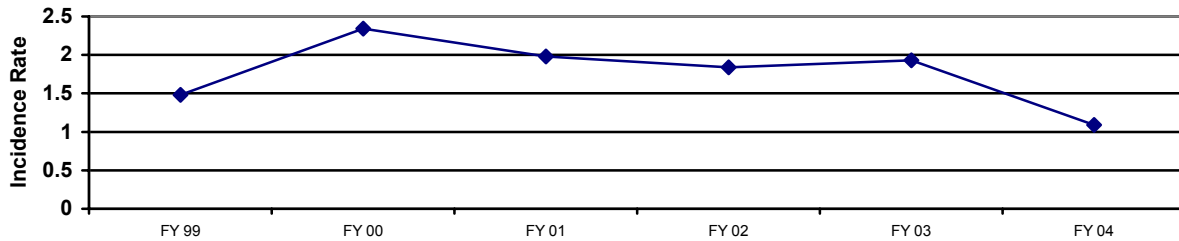
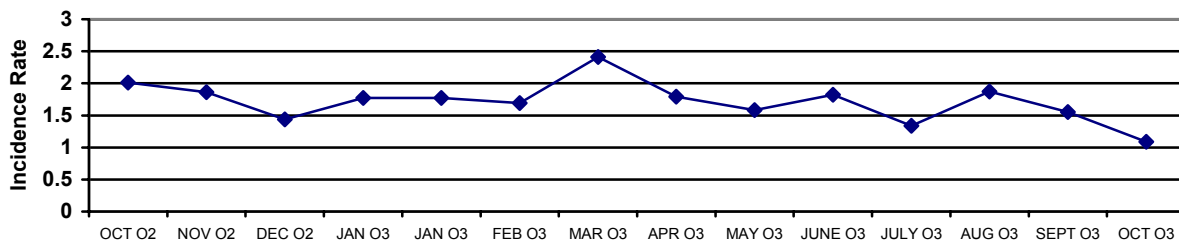


Chart 2

Monthly for Case Incidence Rate Trend (TCIR)



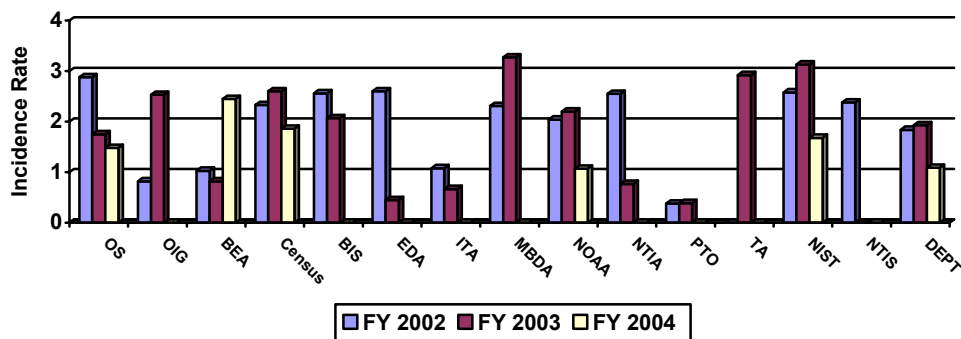
Major Findings include:

- **The FY 2004 Total Case Incidence Rate (TCIR) to date for Commerce is down from the rate for FY 2003 and FY 2002.** The TCIR is 1.09 (see Chart 1) for FY 2004, 1.93 for FY 2003, and 1.84 for FY 2002. A total of 31 total injuries were reported thus far for FY 2004 (see Table 1).
- **Of the larger bureaus, the Bureau of Census (CENSUS) and The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) had lower TCIRs for FY 2004 when compared to FY 2003, however, Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) was higher (see Table 1 and Chart 3).**
- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), only one injury was reported to date in FY 2004.**
- **The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate (TRCIR) for Commerce is down from**

previous years. The TRCIRs for Commerce are 0.85 for FY 2004, 1.48 for FY 2003 and 1.60 for FY 2002 (see Table 1A).

Chart 3

Total Case Incidence Rate Comparison (TCIR)



Types of Injuries: Many of the injuries reported can be prevented through improved safety awareness and proper maintenance. A Departmental and bureau focus on eliminating injuries and illnesses continues to be essential. Evaluating the types of claims submitted and structuring safety awareness training programs to eliminate accidents can assist in the mitigation of injuries and illnesses. Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 4 and 5 and tables 2 and 2A.

- **“Struck By” injuries were the most prevalent type of injury in October 2003 (see Chart 5). These injuries accounted for 22 percent of those reported for FY 2003 (see Chart 4) and 36 percent in October 2003.** Many of the struck by injuries were due to open file cabinets and desk drawers. File cabinets and desk drawers should be closed when not being used.
- **“Exertion” injuries were second in frequency for October 2003 (see Chart 5) and accounted for 25 percent of all injuries within the Department for FY 2003 and for 29 percent in October 2003.** Pushing, lifting and moving heavy objects still account for many of the “Exertion” injuries. Employees should use the proper lifting technique that includes keeping the back straight and lifting with the legs. To avoid back injuries, employees should use carts to move objects and avoid carrying them.
- **“Slips/Falls” injuries remain a concern and accounted for 31 percent of all injuries in FY 2003 (see Chart 4). The numbers have decreased from last month, September**

2003, and account for 16 percent of the injuries reported in October 2003 (see Chart 5). Most slips and falls were due to walking surfaces. Therefore, we reiterate and ask that all DOC employees be more attentive and aware of walking surfaces to help reduce injuries from slips and falls.

Chart 4
Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for FY 2003

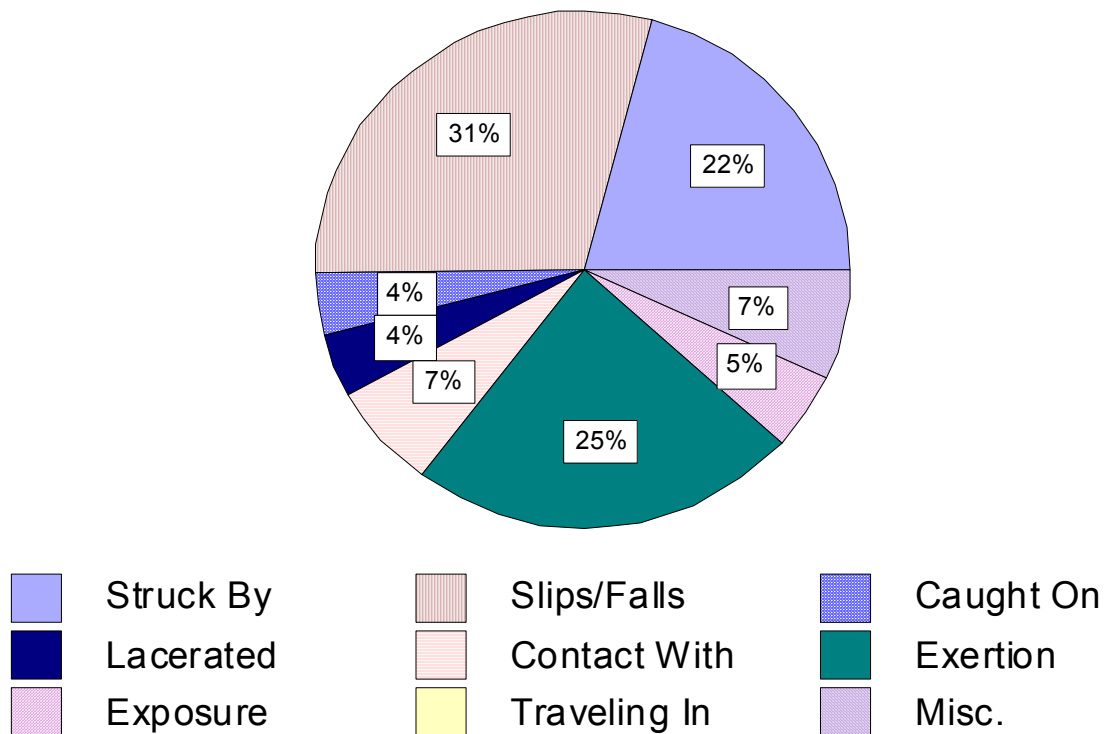


Chart 5

Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries

OCTOBER 03

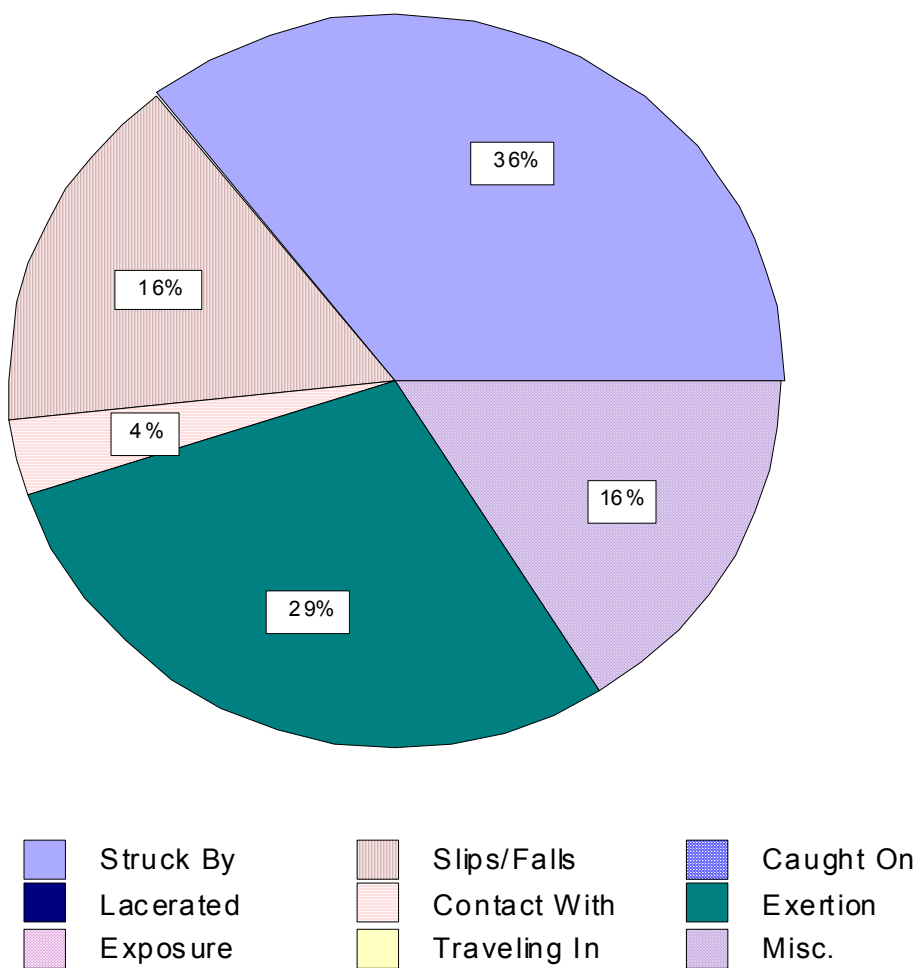


TABLE 1
TOTAL CASE INCIDENCE RATE* (TCIR)

Bureau	FY1999		FY2000		FY2001		FY2002		FY2003		September 2003		October 2003		FY 2004 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	19	2.20*	35	3.94	22	2.47	23	2.88	14	1.75	1	1.50	1	1.48	1	1.48
Office of Inspector General	2	1.32	4	2.98	3	2.15	1	0.82	3	2.53	1	10.10	0	0	0	0
Bureau of Economic Analysis	4	0.88	1	0.23	5	1.12	4	1.03	4	0.82	0	0	1	2.45	1	2.45
Bureau of the Census	311	1.04	383	2.83	393	2.41	241	2.33	252	2.60	21	2.60	15	1.86	15	1.86
Bureau of Industry and Security	11	3.08	15	4.06	9	2.44	9	2.56	7	2.07	0	0	0	0	0	0
Economic Development Administration	9	3.67	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	1	0.45	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	18	0.92	24	1.23	12	0.62	18	1.08	11	0.67	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.10	3	3.40	4	4.36	2	2.31	3	3.27	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	317	2.78	307	2.69	247	2.18	228	2.04	246	2.20	14	1.50	10	1.07	10	1.07
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	2	0.88	2	0.87	7	3.03	6	2.55	2	0.77	0	0	0	0	0	0
Patent and Trademark Office	27	0.47	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	24	0.39	2	0.39	0	0	0	0
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2.92	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Institute of Standards and Technology	84	2.87	79	2.82	68	2.34	76	2.58	90	3.13	5	2.08	4	1.68	4	1.68
National Technical Information Service	6	2.61	4	2.15	1	0.52	4	2.38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	811	1.48	890	2.34	807	1.98	642	1.84	658	1.93	44	1.55	31	1.09	31	1.09
Decennial Census 2000	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3										

* Total Case Incidence Rate includes all cases reported to the Workers' Compensation Program.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Case Incidence Rate.

TABLE 1A
TOTAL RECORDABLE CASE INCIDENCE RATE* (TRCIR)

Bureau	FY1999		FY 2000		FY2001		FY 2002		FY2003		September 2003		October 2003		FY 2004 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	19	2.20*	30	3.38	17	1.91	22	2.75	12	1.50	1	1.50	1	1.48	1	1.48
Office of Inspector General	1	0.66	3	2.24	3	2.15	1	0.82	3	2.53	1	10.10	0	0	0	0
Bureau of Economic Analysis	4	0.88	0	0	5	1.12	3	0.77	3	0.62	0	0	1	2.45	1	2.45
Bureau of the Census	288	0.96	345	2.55	332	2.04	212	2.05	184	1.90	17	2.10	13	1.61	13	1.61
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	2.80	13	3.52	8	2.17	9	2.56	7	2.07	0	0	0	0	0	0
Economic Development Administration	8	3.26	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	17	0.86	22	1.13	11	0.57	10	0.60	11	0.67	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.10	2	2.27	4	4.36	2	2.31	2	2.18	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	275	2.41	289	2.53	225	1.98	203	1.81	196	1.75	13	1.39	8	0.86	8	0.86
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	2	0.88	2	0.87	5	2.16	3	1.27	2	0.77	0	0	0	0	0	0
Patent and Trademark Office	26	0.45	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	24	0.39	2	0.39	0	0	0	0
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2.92	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Institute of Standards and Technology	76	2.60	66	2.36	55	1.89	59	2.00	58	2.01	5	2.08	1	0.42	1	0.42
National Technical Information Service	5	2.18	4	2.15	1	0.52	3	1.78	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	732	1.34	809	2.13	702	1.72	557	1.60	503	1.48	39	1.37	24	0.85	24	0.85
Decennial Census 2000	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3										

* The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate includes only those injuries or illnesses that are reportable to OSHA under 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1904.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Reported Case Incidence Rate.

Table 2

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through October 2003)**

BUREAU	NOAA			CENSUS			NIST			PTO			ITA			OS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	02	03	04	02	03	04	02	03	04	02	03	04	02	03	04	02	03	04	
Struck By/Against An Object	29	55	4	27	45	6	8	26	2	4	5	0	1	3	0	2	3	0	220
Falls/Slips	59	59	1	96	96	3	22	21	0	7	12	0	7	6	0	2	2	0	393
Caught On An Object	5	12	0	8	3	0	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	39
Cuts/Bites	26	5	0	19	19	0	9	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	84
Contact With An Object	19	5	0	11	5	1	6	0	0	6	4	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	60
Exertion/ Motion	64	73	4	37	51	4	17	22	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	1	8	1	288
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	9	9	0	6	18	0	3	3	0	1	0	0	6	1	0	12	0	0	68
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	10	0	0	16	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27
Miscellaneous*	7	22	2	21	10	1	8	8	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	86
TOTAL	228	240	11	241	247	15	76	88	4	24	24	0	18	11	0	23	14	1	1265

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

** Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends

Table 2A

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through October 2003)**

BUREAU	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			Total
Fiscal Year	02	03	04	02	03	04	02	03	04	02	03	04	02	03	04	02	03	04	02	03	04	02	03	04	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	9
Falls/Slips	0	1	0	2	1	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	2	0	0	2	0	18
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact with an Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	5
Exertion/ Motion	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	11
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Miscellaneous*	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	7
Total	1	3	0	4	4	1	6	1	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	6	2	0	2	3	0	9	7	0	54

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

Section Three: Survey Results

We continue to receive comments through the Safety Survey Web Site. We are using employee comments to help shape a safety program responsive to employee issues and concerns. The Web Site can be accessed through the Office of Human Resources Management Homepage at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/>.

Safety Survey Statistics

We received 27 responses through the Web Site survey. The following tables provide some data regarding the distribution of responses by bureau and general geographical area, as well as general safety impressions. The occupational safety and health survey provides feedback from the DOC community we serve and provides an additional insight on whether or not Departmental occupational safety and health programs and initiatives are active.

Table 3a
Safety Survey
November Results

Have you experienced a safety lapse in your work area during the past 3 months?		
Answer	Count	Percent
No	21	77.78%
Yes	6	22.22%

Table 3b
Safety Survey
November Results

Have you noticed any safety improvements in your work area or in the Department as a whole during the past 3 months?		
Answer	Count	Percent
No	19	70.37%
Yes	8	29.63%

Table 3b indicates that there has been a lack of safety improvements in the past three months within the Department. Over 76% of these concerns are associated with the Department's three major bureaus NOAA, CENSUS, and NIST respectively (see Table 3d).

Due to low level of occupational and safety health improvements reported, OOSH will develop a working group with the three major bureaus to determine deficiencies and develop

improvements to their occupational safety and health programmatic.

Table 3c
Safety Survey
November Results by Geographic Area

Geographical Location		
State	Count	Percent
CA	1	3.85%
DC	3	11.54%
ID	1	3.85%
IL	1	3.85%
IN	2	7.69%
MD	11	42.31%
NJ	1	1.54%
SD	1	3.85%
VA	2	7.69%
WA	3	11.54%

Table 3c
Safety Survey
November Results by Bureau/Agency

Bureau Breakdown		
Answer	Count	Percent
CENSUS	5	18.52%
ITA	2	7.41%
NIST	4	14.81%
NOAA	12	44.44%
OS	2	7.41%